



## **Ohio's Cash Assistance Programs and COVID-19**

### **OWF and PRC**

Ohio's stay at home/social distancing orders issued by Governor DeWine and Dr. Acton of the Ohio Department of Health caused many Ohioans to lose their source of income during this crisis. To help you figure out what financial assistance options are available, SEOLS and LASC have put together this brochure, which provides general information about Ohio's cash assistance program, known as Ohio Works First (OWF), and the Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) program, both of which are administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

#### **Q: What is Ohio Works First (OWF)?**

A: Ohio Works First (OWF) is a time limited cash assistance program for families with children with very low to no income also known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

#### **Q: Who can receive Ohio Works First (OWF)?**

A: You must be an Ohio resident; a U.S. citizen, national, legal alien, or permanent resident; be six months pregnant or be responsible for a child under 19 years of age; have very low income; and be under-employed, unemployed, or about to become unemployed. Certain relative caretakers of a minor child in the household may also qualify for benefits. Child-only OWF payments also exist.

#### **Q: How long can you receive Ohio Works First (OWF)?**

A: Ohio's time limit to get OWF is 36 months. The federal TANF program allows up to 60 months of these cash benefits.

#### **Q: Can I get Ohio Works First (OWF) if I was time-limited off benefits?**

A: Yes, but you will have to apply for OWF and request an extension. Three types of extensions are available: a state/county hardship extension; a good cause extension for those who have not used OWF for 24 months; and a federal hardship extension.

**State/County hardship** extension periods are determined by each local Job and Family Services (JFS) office and require you to reapply for additional extensions as your extension expires.

**Good Cause** extension periods are for 24 additional months of OWF eligibility and are only determined once.

**Federal hardship** extensions are available once you received OWF for 60 months and are based on the same criteria as the state/county hardship.



**Q.: How do I apply for OWF?**

A: You can apply online at <https://benefits.ohio.gov/> or you can fill out the “Request for Cash, Food and Medical Assistance” form (JFS 7200) and submit it to your local JFS office. To find your local JFS office: search online at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/County/index.stm>; call 1-866-365-3748 and select Option 4; or look in your local phone book. If you are planning on using the form JFS 7200, you should call your local JFS office for instructions on how to submit the form because many offices are currently closed to the public but have options for telephone interviews during the COVID-19 crisis.

**Q: Will I have to complete work requirements to get OWF during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A: You will be expected to complete work assignments that do not violate the stay at home order. Because some work sites have closed and JFS offices are closed to the public at this time, chances are you will be granted good cause if you cannot complete your work requirements. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families issued guidance advising States to liberally grant good cause exemptions for persons that cannot complete work assignments because of illness (theirs or caring for another), child care due to school and daycare closures, work placement closure, or other similar barrier caused by COVID-19. This same guidance also suggests the use of online work activities and trainings to the extent possible to allow for continued completion of work requirements during this period.

**Q: If my county’s Job and Family Services is requiring me to come into the office to complete online work activities and trainings but I am concerned about contracting the coronavirus, what should I do?**

A: Most JFS offices are not requiring in-office work activity or trainings during the stay at home order. If your agency requires you to visit their office and you have a disability that makes you vulnerable to the coronavirus, you have the right to request a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act so that you do not have to go into the office to use available computers. Additionally, you should request a good cause exemption if you cannot complete a work requirement until the stay at home and social distancing orders end.

**Q: I received Ohio Works First (OWF) in the past but lost the benefits due to sanctions. Can I reapply?**

A: Yes, you can reapply. But you will have to sign a Sanction Compliance form. JFS offices can use verbal signatures during COVID-19, so you should contact your local office as soon as possible to remedy the sanction and to reapply for OWF. Use the contact information below to contact the legal aid nearest you for help.

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